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BY

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NEW YORK
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
AND LONDON
1892

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TROW DIRECTORY
PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING COMPANY
NEW YORK

PREFACE

THESE poems, written in leisure hours during the past and previous years, were already in proof at the time of my husband's death, and he was occupied during the last few weeks of his life in revising them. No doubt they would have received from himself still further correction, and he had ordered several privately printed copies, to submit to the judgment of friends. These did not arrive till the day after his death.

While each of the poems is complete in itself, they are so arranged as to form a connected whole, and are meant to be read consecutively. My husband's intention was to represent progressive

stages of feeling, and, in accordance with this design, he divided the book into four parts, each with its corresponding motto prefixed. There was a poem originally included in the first part which he did not think good enough, and had made up his mind to omit. The last days of his life were spent, as if in haste, in the composition of another, to take its place. This was never finished, but I give the fragment at the end of the volume, as I found it by his bedside, with the ink hardly dry on the paper.

A longer and more elaborate poetical work is also ready for publication, but my husband contemplated publishing these shorter poems first, and they will, I am sure, be especially welcomed by the old faithful friends and admirers of "Owen Meredith."

E. L.

BRAMFIELD HOUSE:
January 9, 1892.

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PROLOGUE

1

LURED by the promise of a better land,
They wander'd in the wilderness of Shur;
Vagrants, from bondage fled, a weary band,
Whose weariness each day made wearier;
And waterless was all the desert sand,
No wells at hand!

2

A place at last they reach'd, in sore distress,
Where water flow'd, but from a bitter spring.
Then cried they, 'Here we die of thirst, unless
God turn this bitter sweet!' And, murmuring,
They call'd it Marah. Nor can speech express
More bitterness.

I.

1

Tears are Christian, kisses Pagan. Love is both, and each his prize.
On his lips are Pagan kisses, Christian tears are in his eyes.

2

Magdalens with Mænads mingle in his rites, and round his way
Intertwine the rose of Paphos with the thorns of Golgotha.

3

Thorn or rose, which best becomes him? Both his loveliness endears:
Roses red with Pagan kisses, thorns bedew'd with Christian tears!

'THAT IS THE QUESTION'

1

One ask'd me suddenly if I thought her fair;
And then, for the first time, I felt, 'How dull
These eyes, that have so long been unaware
Whether she is, or is not, beautiful!'

2

But I have had no time to find that out,
Nor thought to spare to it from days all pass'd
In one continual fluctuating doubt
Whether she loves me yet, or will at last.

HIC INCEPIT

1

SOMETHING wild as the heart of a boy
(But what is it?) awakens in me,
Like the love of a love, and the joy
Of a joy, that are going to be;

2

Or the nebulous beam in the breast
Of a mist the moon brightens behind;
A prediction that does but suggest
A fulfilment it leaves undefined.

3

It was born of a breath and a dream,
'Tis the soul of a look or a tone,
And the parent of pleasures that seem
But as preludes to others unknown.

4

Yet how soon could its sweetness be kill'd
By the pang of a premature bliss,
And so die of a promise fulfill'd
On the lips I am longing to kiss!

CHI LO SA?

I

PRITHEE tell me, Sweet, how shall I ever
Have deserved thee? What trials, what tears,
What renewals of daily endeavour,
What endurance of sorrowful years,
May bear witness how well I have loved thee,
And establish my claim to thy heart?
Or when long thou hast tried me and proved me,
Will it be but to bid me depart?
Ah, could love be obtain'd for love's sake!
But the gift is bestow'd, and not owed,
Nor can worth any claim to it make.
For the blessing of love is a boon from above
And no heed of desert doth it take.

2

Blowing tree, the full blossoms that bend thee
May be all of them promises vain!
Who can say whether heaven will yet send thee
The good chance of its ripening rain?
Glowing heart, the fond dreams that possess thee
May be all lying prophets at best!
Who can say if she ever will bless thee
With one moment of bliss on her breast?
Ah, could love be obtain'd for love's sake!
But 'tis purchased by none, nor yet won,
Tho' to win it life's all be the stake.
For the blessing of love is a boon from above,
And no heed of desert doth it take.

IF . . . . ?

1

So you but love me, be it your own way,
In your own time, no sooner than you will,
No warmer than you would from day to day,
But love me still!

2

Each day that still you love me seems to me
A little fairer than the day before;
For, daily given, love's least must daily be
A little more.

3

And be my most gain'd your least given, if such
Your sweet will be! I reckon not the cost,
Nor count the gain, by little or by much,
Or least or most.

4

Little or much, to me the gift I crave
Is all in all. There is not any measure
Of more or less can gauge the need I have
Of that dear treasure.

5

So you but love me, tho' your love be cold,
Mine it can chill not. Tho' your love come late,
Mine for its coming, by sweet dreams foretold,
Will dreaming wait.

6

Yet ah, if some far chance, before I die,
One hour of waking life might let me live,
Rich with the dream'd-of dear reality
'Tis yours to give!

7

Your whole sweet self, with your sweet self's whole love!
Those eyes of fire and dew, those lips wish-haunted,
Those feet whose steps like elfin music move
Thro' worlds enchanted!

8

Your whole sweet self! The unutter'd thoughts that stir
Your lonest musings with light wings unheard,
And feelings that find no interpreter
In deed or word!

9

Your whole sweet self, that, till by love reveal'd,
Even to yourself still half unknown must be!
For of the wealth in souls like yours conceal'd
Love keeps the key.

10

Ah, if your whole sweet self, by all the power
Of your sweet self's whole love in some divine
Far distant hour made wholly yours, that hour
Made wholly mine,

11

And if in that blest hour all dreams came true,
All doubts dissolved, all fears were whirl'd away
In one wild storm of tendernesses new
As time's first day,

12

What should we both be? Hush! I do not dare
Even to hear my own heart's whisper utter'd
Be its sole answerer the silent air
This sigh has flutter'd!

TELEPATHY

1

LAST night we met, where others meet,
To part as others part;
And greeted but as others greet,
Who greet not heart to heart;

2

We talk'd of other things, and then
To other folk pass'd by;
You turn'd and sat with other men;
With other women, I.

3

And yet a world of things unsaid
Meanwhile between us pass'd;
Your cheek my phantom kiss flush'd red,
And you look'd up at last;

4

And then your glance met mine midway
Across the chattering crowd;
And all that heart to heart can say
Was in that glance avow'd.

HER PORTRAIT

1

HER form has the mingled grace
Of a child and a queen in one.
There is pride in her pure young face,
In her voice is a far-off tone,
And her eyes have the gaze of a forest creature
That has lived in the woods alone.

2

A creature whose steps are light
As the leaflets brusht by its brow,
When 'tis stay'd in its buoyant flight
By the sound of a rustling bough,

And, suddenly motionless, looks and listens
As she looks and is listening now.

3

But a young queen, too, she looks.
And I think that a woodland doe,
If transform'd, as in fairy books,
By the magic of long ago
To a mystical, milk-white, maiden princess
Would listen and look just so.

4

Her summers, at most nineteen,
Are yet short of a single score;
Twice as much has the number been
Of my winters, and something more;
And my knowledge of life is a cramm'd museum,
Hers only an infant's store.

5

Yet I see but thro' her wild eyes,
And my thoughts are whatever she thinks ;
If she praises, I feel I am wise;
If she censures, my confidence sinks;
And, as judged by the least of her looks and glances,
My spirit expands or shrinks.

6

I have faced the world in my day,
And have fought it and overthrown;
I have struggled and won my way,
And no rival has beaten me down;
Yet my courage fails, and my whole frame falters,
If she chances to chide or frown.

7

Her light little step outstrips
My stride, to ascents sublime;

Hid in shadows that haunt her lips
Are the secrets of space and time;
And, attuned to the music around her moving,
The stars in their courses chime.

8

She has read not the tedious tale
Of the dead world's grief and glee,
Nor been stirr'd by the shrill birth-wail
Of the ages beginning to be;
But she carries secure at her simple girdle
The Infinite's golden key.

9

I have gather'd what life can give,
With the prizes its pains confer;
Yet for naught do I care to live
But to love and be loved by her.
Fate, grant me but this, and all gains and glories
I surrender without demur!

DEFECTIVE TITLE

1

MINE, and mine only, and all mine,
Spirit and flesh, and brain and heart,
By right of birth, and right divine,
And every right but one, thou art.

2

But, wanting that one right, I know
The rest are wrongs without redress.
Ah, child, a kingless kingdom thou,
And I a king that's kingdomless!

INVESTITURE

1

KINGDOMLESS? No! For infinite
The kingdom is, thro' thee made mine;
And there I reign by royal right
Sole lord of regions all divine.

2

Nor kingless thou, whose monarch crown'd
And robed am I, in realms afar,
Fairer than all that here are found
On earth. For not of earth they are.

CORROBORATION

1

Is it the echo of a word,
  Whose lingering tones betoken
I dream'd it not, but really heard?
  And was it sung, or spoken?

2

Some great good news has come to me,
  I know. But who averr'd it?
And it is true? And was it she
  That whisper'd, I that heard, it?

3

So light that whisper fell, methought
No sense but mine it flutter'd.
What tell-tale Spirit can have caught
A sound so softly utter'd,

4

And spread the message wide, and told
The gathering stars to greet it
With signals flash'd from shafts of gold,
The sea-waves to repeat it,

5

The woods its influence to attest,
And the soft winds that heave them?
They all assure me I am blest,
And I must needs believe them.

6

Stars, waves, and woods, and winds, no fear
  Have I lest you be lying,
For to your tale my heart can hear
  The harps of Heaven replying.

SUMMER NIGHT

1

THE summer night fills heaven's remotest spheres
With stars and meteors. And with fluttering fires
My heart's thrill'd deeps are throng'd by radiant tears
And bright desires.

2

Heaven and my heart these summer glories share.
Nor ever, since Latona brought to birth
The first New Moon, has summer night so fair
Bless'd heaven and earth.

3

Heaven's own the stars are, and the meteors: mine
The tears and the desires, that meteors are
And stars of another heaven, no less divine,
Tho' not so far.

4

Tears into stars distill'd from that delight
The nightingale to the sweet silence sings!
Desires that roam love's fervid infinite
On flaming wings,

5

The meteor-pulses of its palpitatn blue!
And tears, desires, and stars, the night and I,
All, all, are tremulous with thoughts of you,
Each thought a joy!

AWAY!

1

COME away, love! With me, love, away!
Far away from the world that we know,
Far from all we have done till to-day,
And from all we have been until now
Far away!

2

Set impassable distance between
All that was and that is! And let naught
Be remember'd, heard, spoken, or seen
That can ever remind us of aught
That has been!

3

Of the past every vestige efface,
With its doings, whatever they were!
Of each circumstance, person, and place
That have been its accomplices, spare
Not a trace!

4

And discard with the days that are done
All their cumbrous caparisonings!
Of old habitudes need have we none,
Who have only to spread out our wings
And be gone.

5

But wherever they bear us away,
Be it far from the world that we know!
Far from all we have done till to-day,
And from all we have been until now
Far away!

ABSENCE

1

Not in my life, but yours, I live;
And from myself I seem to be
As far away, dear fugitive,
As you are far from me.

2

Unlit by you, no light have I,
A fainting lamp that's fed by none!
The earth seems left without a sky,
The sky without a sun.

3

Come back! come back! And with you bring
All that with you is gone away,
Warmth, light, life, love, and everything
That stays but where you stay!

WAITING

1

THE years that are before us still
May to our lives allot
Mischance of many a kind, and fill
Time's empty lap with many an ill.
That thought affrights me not.

2

But six short weeks are still to pass
Before the long'd-for day
That brings her back; and these, alas!
If these go wrong? The future has
For me no worse dismay.

3

Only six weeks! But each contains
How many perilous hours!
Each hour how many possible pains,
How many risks! What blights and banes
To dread from unknown Powers!

4

With her, no fears my heart appal,
Tho' life with ills be throng'd:
Without her, no mischance so small
But it may prove the worst of all,
Absence from her prolong'd!

5

I dread not foes that love may find
Along the distant track
Of future years. But O, be kind,
You Powers that now rule wave and wind,
And bring her safely back!

DEATH

SHE came not back. She will not come again;
And I shall never any more behold
Her dear, dear face. But absence was worse pain
Than death is now that Memory keeps safe hold
Of all Hope miss'd. A pure dawn to the last
Our love was, and no change can cloud it now.
Here on thy grave in the eternal past,
Heart of my heart, these fading flowers I strow.
Here let them perish! From their fate secure,
Thou, where they blossom'd, deep in my dream-life
(Death's changeless charm all thine) dost still endure
Undying. More to me than bride or wife,

Heaven's revelation thou remainest, seen
First in the wish'd-for future, now seen best
In the saved past, of love that might have been
Less beautiful if earth had once possess'd
Its beauty. Memory, that makes thee mine,
Is quieter than Hope, and happier too.
Safe are the treasures of her sober shrine,
And even her sweetest oracles are true.
Ah, dearest! Thou and Death have given me all
The blessing of a past where Memory finds
Nothing she is not thankful to recall—
No pain, no bitterness, no tear that blinds,
No word that wounds! Life might have marr'd
all this,
And spoilt the sweetness Death perpetuates.
Now, all that was, unmix'd with all that is,
Remains itself, and perfect. The harsh Fates,
That menace all things happy, from my heart
Thy truth can turn not, nor thy love estrange.
Far, far, beloved, beyond my reach thou art—

But also far beyond the reach of change!
Safe from the years and sorrows come and gone
Since thou didst go, who never back wilt come,
Where is thy home now, unreturning one?
Has the soul anywhere a stable home?
Shall I rejoin thee ever? Shall we meet
Once more, beyond the dark and narrow gate
Now shut between us? Or does life still fleet
Forever onward, still importunate,
And still unpacified, from sphere to sphere,
In unreposing progress to no goal?
So that the bliss beyond us speeding here
Shall still beyond us speed throughout the whole
Vast cycle of infinity, and thou
A bliss beyond me still forever be?
I know not. But no Heaven exists, I know,
That I can gain without regaining thee.
And if this sense of self, wherein we place
Life's purpose, be no more than the brief play
Of combinations that in boundless space

And endless time shall be dissolved away
Into the universal consciousness,
Whence for a while it separates us here,
Thy soul to mine has granted none the less
Some earthly foretaste of a heavenlier sphere;
With this much gain'd—that here a love so fair,
So finely wrought, so sensitive as ours,
Wither'd not, nor grew coarse, in that bad air
Which brings to blossom none but poison-flowers.

Safe-hidden, undiscover'd, undefiled
In the still past, on thy pure grave I write
No name, no date. And here may roses wild
With their ungather'd growths conceal it quite!
So shall no curious gossips guess the way
My secret footsteps find, escaping oft
From life's loud throngs, when here at fall of day
They steal in silence thro' the twilight soft.

II.

1

I gave her love : I gave her faith and truth :
I gave her adoration, vassalage,
And tribute of life's best : the dream's of youth,
The deeds of manhood, and the stores of age.

2

She took my gifts, and turn'd them into pain.
Each gift she made a bitter curse to be,
Then, marr'd, she gave them back to me again.
And this is all she ever gave to me.

EXPERIENTIA DOCET?

1

VAIN is the experience of the past
To guide their steps who rove,
By ways each different from the last,
The 'wildering realms of Love!

2

For no new movements of the heart
Are ever like the old,
Nor has their tale its counterpart
In those by Memory told.

3

The records of the pilgrimage
  Of passion are impress'd
Each on the renovated page
  Of a blanch'd palimpsest.

4

To mock the faith that lovers place
  In life's acquired love-lore,
New lessons, latest learn'd, efface
  Old teachings taught before.

5

And we ourselves within us bear,
  Tho' to ourselves unknown,
New lives, that with new loves appear,
  And new selves of their own.

6

Thus every love is, of its kind,
A first love and a last;
And every time we love, we find
That love has had no past.

OMENS AND ORACLES

I

ALL the phantoms of the future, all the spectres
of the past,
In the wakeful night came round me, sighing,
crying, 'Fool, beware!
Check the feeling o'er thee stealing! Let thy first
love be thy last!
Or, if love again thou must, at least this fatal
love forbear!'

Marah Amara!

2

Now the dark breaks. Now the lark wakes. Now
their voices fleet away.
And the breeze about the blossom, and the
ripple in the reed,
And the beams, and buds, and birds begin to whis-
per, sing, or say,
'Love her, love her, for she loves thee!' And I
know not which to heed.

Cara Amara!

IDOLATRY

1

To love is to create, down here below,
A god on earth; and for that god do even
More than his earthly worshipper can do
For the great God in Heaven.

2

But, since naught perfect is on earth, and none
Entirely good, the god on earth created
Is but a half-divine, half-devilish one;
A god half loved, half hated.

3

Half loved, half hated, but so all adored
That for its favour nothing seems a price
Too great: not even life lost and blood pour'd
In human sacrifice.

4

And all ungrudged, for this god's worshipt sake,
His heart's blood drop by drop the adorer gives,
His life's life hour by hour; nor shrinks to break
The heart of other lives.

ANTAGONISMS

1

Ah, who can reconcile the Brain and Heart?
Reason and Passion? Thought and Sentiment?
Genius and Woman? Far they tend apart,
And only meet in terrible dissent.

2

Genius, sufficing to itself, abounds
In its own being. Love can but fulfil
Its being in another. Woman founds
Her power upon the ruins of Man's will.

3

The love she gives him costs a kingdom's price,
Tho' freely given the gift. It takes away
His grandeur from him. And that sacrifice
She neither understands, nor can repay.

AMARI ALIQUID

I

DEAREST, our love is perfect, as love goes!
Your kisses fill my frame and fire my blood;
And nothing fails the sweetness each bestows,
Except the joy of being understood.

2

If, for one single moment, once alone,
And in no more than one thing only, this
Moreover only the most trivial one,
You could but understand me—ah, the bliss!

ARS AMORIS

1

THE world has tangled in its web Love's wings,
And to the captive god no freedom grants.
Mix'd with material marketable things
And social wants,

2

Throughout the struggling ranks of Modern Life
Love has become a means of livelihood;
Matter for bargain keen, or envious strife,
Like clothes and food.

3

And what the Modern Man and Woman try
To find in love, or by its means acquire,
Is comfort, wealth, respectability,
A step set higher

4

On life's throng'd social ladder. Nay, even less:
A luxury, a vanity, a mode,
An attitude, a pastime, a small cess
To Custom owed!

5

Whate'er the gain by these from love expected,
Whether its acquisition be in pelf
Or pleasure, it is wholly unconnected
With love itself.

6

For 'tis not love they love, but life provided
With what they deem love capable of giving ;
And, in the act of loving, each is guided
By the art of living.

7

Therefore, O Love, because to all life's plans
And projects some promotion thou impartest,
Thou still hast many zealous artisans,
Tho' not one artist.

MARAH'S DOWER

TWO Muses Marah's dower supply,
And each a gift bestows:
For all her looks are Poetry,
And all her feelings Prose.

RUBIES AND PEARLS

1

ALL I had to give, I gave her. First my kisses, then my tears.
But the little one would have them not. 'What use are they?' she said.
Sad, I went away, and dwelt among the tombs, where days are years,
With the Witch that gathers herbs there, and her children who are dead.

2

They and I became companions; and their dusty shrouds were wet
With my flowing tears, and warm beneath my kiss their white lips burn'd,

Till the Witch, whose graveyard-gatherings rare
miracles beget,
Wrought my kisses into rubies, and my tears to
pearls she turn'd.

3

But she drain'd into each ruby's heart from mine
a drop of blood,
And a purity my spirit lost with every pearl
that fell.
Then she laugh'd, 'Good pearls thy tears are now,
thy kisses rubies good,
And the proper use of precious stones thy little
one knows well.'

4

So I took my pearls and rubies to the little one I
love,
She that loves me not. And, when her pretty
eyes beheld them, wild

Beat her little heart with eagerness its pride in
them to prove,
And she kiss'd and kiss'd me, weeping tears of
pleasure like a child.

5

Still she wears them, still she shows them to her
lovers with delight.
And her little heart would break, I think, if one
of them were lost;
For the sweetest of its pleasures is the envy they
excite,
And 'tis spoilt by no suspicion of the price that
they have cost.

DREAMS

1

A LAND of luminous azure, glowing green,
And purple, and roseate gold, fill'd everywhere
With fervid colour and light; and all things seen
Clear thro' a lucid calm of cloudless air:

2

The rippled sapphires of a summer sea,
Steep'd in the sunshine of a southern sky,
Washing warm bowery bays where tree to tree
Loose roses link'd with labyrinthine tie

3

Among them glimmer'd many a statued flight
Of marble stairs, beneath the twinkling gloss
Of blossom-laden boughs: and streams shone white,
Streaking green glens faint rainbows roof'd across:

4

Seaward on sunny slopes a little town
Sparkled with terraced streets, where all day long
A glad-faced folk went sauntering up and down,
Whose talk was tuned to some soft foreign tongue:

5

Foreign, at least, their tongue to me and you;
For you and I, dropp'd who knows how down here,
Were strangers from afar; and so we two
To one another had grown strangely near.

6

All this I dream'd. Then woke, and with dim gaze
Saw, thro' the window-curtains half withdrawn,
Wan street-lamps film'd beneath a frozen haze,
And snow-flakes falling in the wintry dawn.

7

And all at once, with a recurrent pain,
I realised how far away you were,
How near at hand my troubles! And then again
I slept, and dream'd. Ah, what a change was there!

8

Nor sea nor land this time. No nature. All
Was artificial. For I stood, methought,
In a vast house of many mansions: hall
Succeeding hall: huge chambers, richly wrought

9

In clear communication each with each,
Thro' multitudes of doors set open wide,
And lit by windows so far out of reach
That they reveal'd not anything outside.

10

Around me, here and there, and to and fro,
A wistful crowd continually went.
I knew them not. Nor did they seem to know
Each other. All were silent: each intent

11

On his own business, or his own design.
No care had I to guess what that might be;
For I was equally intent on mine,
Heedless of others as they were of me.

12

And conscious all the while, I knew not how,
That somewhere in this house, among that crowd,
I was to find you ; tho' no sign to show
Where was vouchsafed me, and no guide allow'd.

13

So, on, through those innumerable doors,
Door after door, in search of you I pass'd,
And over those interminable floors,
Floor after floor, with steps that hasten'd fast,

14

And fiercely beating heart. But nowhere you,
Nor any trace of you ! And time went by,
The light began to fail, my courage too,
And then I noticed all were gone but I.

15

Gone! By what means? Impossible to guess!
For go, I could not. Each room only led
Into another room. A wilderness
Of rooms and rooms on all sides round me spread!

16

To deep discouragement succeeded fear—
A fear lest I forever should remain
Wandering about in that mad maze of drear
And darkening halls! I knew my search was vain,

17

And that I should not ever find you there.
My one thought was to get away—get back
To the outer world, and nature, and fresh air.
Vain thought! The night, that crept upon my track,

18

Was bringing with it who could say what strange
New horror? And still wandering, still astray,
I roam'd and roam'd that never-ending range
Of rooms and rooms, whence still there was no
way.

19

Door after door I tried. No door was shut.
But door to door succeeded, hall to hall.
None to my flight did any barrier put,
But egress was in turn denied by all.

20

I turn'd, despairing, to the windows. These
Might favour flight, I hoped, if once attain'd.
But no! For they receded by degrees
As I advanced, and out of reach remain'd.

21

At last I noticed, close at hand, what seem'd
A shut door in the wall. And 'Here, perchance,
From this bewildering labyrinth,' I deem'd,
'May be some means for my deliverance!'

22

I push'd the latchet, hope with fear and doubt
Contending. The door open'd. From the shelf
Of some dark cupboard it disclosed, sprang out
A corpse. I knew it. 'Twas my own dead Self.

23

And my dead Self pursued me. Fast I fled.
But fast it follow'd. Its sepulchral breath
Clung like a cloud about me. It was dead,
And yet unnaturally alive in death.

24

The horror and the terror of it grew
Until they reach'd the point of madness. Then
The whole wild vision from my sense withdrew,
And, spent and faint, I lay awake again;

25

But still in fear lest on me sleep should glide,
And again fix me with its ghostly fetter;
A doubting hand I stretch'd to the bedside,
And there I found (thrice woe is me!) your letter.

26

Your dreadful letter, with its heartless words!
A trance my life since that sick moment seems,
Whence never any waking hour affords
Release from days far worse than night's worst dreams.

FIGURES OF SPEECH

1

Ah, still even strangers' lips renew
  The magic of your name!
Last night, when some one spoke of you,
  I felt my blood turn flame.

2

Your fair friend said, 'Tho' so besought,
  And so admired, how free
From vanity, how pure in thought,
  And true in deed, is she!

3

'Her soul's even fairer than her face.
Do *you* not think so too?'
And with beatified grimace
I lied, and said, 'I do.'

THE ONLY DIFFERENCE

1

I DEEM'D you truest of the true,
And loved you. Now I see
That you were treacherous thro' and thro',
And love you still, woe's me!

2

The only difference is this:
The gilt is off the chain,
And what was once a golden bliss
Is now an iron pain.

ONE ROSE

1

My blessing on you, roses, all save one!
Curst be the blood-red rose she used to wear
In those fierce summers that have slain my sun,
To lure love to her bosom and her hair!

2

The past's spent torments does that rose renew.
Hot from my heart its hated petals take
The blood that gives them their ensanguined hue,
And all my life is paler for its sake.

BY THE GATES OF HELL

1

WHERE the shadow of darkness darkest fell
In the Valley of Tears, by the Gates of Hell,
I was 'ware of an old man, wan as a ghost.
He was bitterly weeping: and there for years,
By the Gates of Hell, in the Valley of Tears,
He had wept and wept for a loved one lost.

2

'Be consoled!' I said. 'For the Gates of Hell
Thou hast pass'd not yet, and the griefs that dwell
In the Valley of Tears, be they ne'er so sore,
Yet by little and little they pass away,
And by little and little there comes a day
When the day that was is a grief no more.'

3

'I have pass'd thro' worse than the Gates of Hell,
And I know,' he said, 'that for those 'tis well
Who are weeping the loved one lost by death.
For by little and little their grief goes by,
And the dead are forgot, and the living will die,
And a hope still lingers the grave beneath.

4

'But as bitter and fierce as the pangs of Hell
(For there is not a hope in their long farewell)
Are the tears that are shed, on no grave that's seen
For the loss of a loved one lost by life.
And each tortures the heart, like a burning knife,
With the trace of a day that in vain has been.'

WHEN ALL IS OVER

1

When you and I are dead, when all is over,
Life's long confusions clear'd, love's trials past,
The truth, they hid and hurt, will you discover,
And know and understand me at the last?
When all is over!

2

And will you then be sad for all I suffer'd?
You, to whose trusted hand's mistrustful blow
This poor wrong'd heart's defenceless fondness offer'd
So safe a mark! Will you be sad to know
The pain it suffer'd?

3

If so, perchance what might have been, and was not,
You then will honour more than what has been ;
And life, when lost, will have what now it has not,
Your wish, at least, that its set suns had seen
The day that was not.

4

That was not, but that would have been, my dearest,
Had you had faith in it, or faith in me !
For that day's dawn, tho' long delay'd, was nearest
Just when you chose that it should never be
Our day, my dearest.

5

If, even when all is over, still you never
Will know or understand, then must I pray
That death be one long dreamless sleep forever,
If more than now you know, you never may,
Still never, never!

6

But if you know at last, and sigh to know it
Too late, that sigh will all my pain requite.
Better too late than never! Could death show it,
I think 'twould, even then, set all things right
To know you know it.

III.

1

If thou art still a griefless girl or boy,
In love with life, and ignorant of love's grave,
Read not herein! For thee no gift have I,
And be thou thankful that no gift I have!

2

But if time's wayworn traveller thou art,
Hail, pilgrim! 'Tis for thee this book was writ.
The same sad pilgrimage, tho' far apart,
We two have made, and know the pain of it.

LIFE

WHAT is life? The incessant desiring
Of a joy that is never acquired;
And, instead of that joy, the acquiring
Of enjoyments that are not desired.

SEMPER EADEM

1

THE years go by. They bring no change, but only
The curse of custom, adding length to grief,
And pressure to the crowd that makes more lonely
The lone heart's changeless longing for relief.

2

Relief from wretched memories of things lost,
Relief in words that find no utterance now,
Relief from dead love's still undying ghost,
Relief in tears that long have ceased to flow!

3

O could I weep, weep, weep away this weight
Of tearless, time-worn, inarticulate pain,
Whose heavy burden no blest hopes abate!
O for release, rest, death! In vain, in vain!

FIRELIGHT

1

A FEELING to-night comes o'er me
That once in this hearth's dim gleam
I was happy beyond all dreaming,
But it may have been only a dream.

2

A dream or a memory is it,
That here in the same soft glow
Two entranced ones nestled together,
And that I was one of the two?

3

I seem to remember a gladness
  That haunted of old this spot.
But was it mine or another's ?
  Ah, that I remember not !

GHOSTS

1

We died, she and I, the same day. That I know;
Tho' we died, I remember not when;
But together we died; and I cannot guess how
We are here with the living again.

2

We ought to be both in our graves: and this much
I can tell by the shuddering thrill
That a dead corpse feels at the casual touch
Of a corpse more inanimate still.

3

But spells we obey, and are bound by their guile,
Dead and gone tho' we be, to contrive
For the sake of appearance to chatter and smile,
And pretend to be feeling alive.

4

I know, little friend, tho' defunct, you can do
With the smallest allowance of rest.
'Twas the joy of your life to be seen, and to go
About everywhere, daintily dress'd.

5

You never were glad to get early to bed;
And this constantly gadding about,
As you liked it alive, may have charms for you dead.
But for me—it is wearing me out!

6

Do, dear, for the sake of the days that are gone,
Put me back in my coffin and pall!
Nothing black for my burial need you put on,
Nor be miss'd from the liveliest ball.

7

From asking the living to lend me a hand
To get back to my grave, I refrain;
For I fear lest the living should misunderstand
What 'tis hard for the dead to explain.

8

But you are as little alive, dear, as I.
And I have not a sister or brother
To vouchsafe me this service. Nor can you deny
That the dead have a claim on each other.

NUNC STANS

1

Ah, the dead they may bury their dead,
The unborn bring to birth their unborn,
But, ere life's flitting minute be fled,
Let us live, and laugh sorrow to scorn!

2

Past and Future, the permanent states
Of the fugitive Present, fleet fast
With its flight, that in flying creates
The fixt forms of the Future and Past.

3

Borne along in its boundless embrace,
The brief moments the centuries span;
And thro' time, as his shadow thro' space,
Does the Present accompany man.

PERVERSITY

Restless, unthankful, in a heaven all shining
With lights serene my fever'd spirit doth dwell;
And wild thro' Paradise it wanders, pining
For the hot feasts of Hell.

HAUNTED

For years (How many years? To me they seem'd
Hundreds of thousands. With eternity
Of torment every moment of them teem'd!)
The all-enduring slave of Pain was I.
At last, this servitude to suffering grew
Grievous beyond endurance. I arose,
And in revolt my tyrant, Pain, I slew.
A secret, dark, and hollow spot I chose
Among the ruin'd places of the past,
And buried murder'd Pain there. Then I went
Forth, an emancipated slave at last,
And mingled with the world, and was content,

And feasted, and made merry; laughing, 'This
Is life, and life is beautiful again!'
But in mid-revel I began to miss
Something which I had buried with dead Pain.
I knew not what: but for the want of it
I could not take my pleasure as before
In pleasant things. A shadow seem'd to flit
Beside me, always sighing, 'Nevermore!'
So from the revellers I stole away
Homeward. And here upon my hearth I found
A Spectre sitting. It was husht, and grey,
And ghastly. Its dim hooded brows were bound
With poisonous nightshade. A cold hand it laid
Upon me. My soul sicken'd. Helplessly
I groan'd, 'What art thou?' and the Spectre said,
'The ghost of Pain, whose name is now Ennui!'

EPISODE

1

I LOVE thy body better than thy soul.
I love thy beauty better than thy heart.
To me the part is dearer than the whole
Of all thou art.

2

For our lips naturally meet: but not
Our natures, not our thoughts. Far, far from thine
My spirit wanders lone. Thy heart hath got
No key to mine.

3

And 'tis adultery I commit with thee:
For to another woman I am wed;
Tho', save in dreams, her face I shall not see
Till I am dead.

4

We miss'd each other in the porch of Birth,
And there took different ways: mine earthward set
And hers I know not whither. But on earth
We have never met.

LIES

Ah, let me gaze still silent in those eyes,
Nor ask me what my soul is seeking there!
Tho' all that there is sought and found be lies,
If you and I on their false witness swear
Our love is love forever, were it wise
To test a fraud that is for both so fair?
Faith in it turns to treasures that I prize,
The faint scent breathing from your fawn-brown hair
And foam-white throat; the subtle mysteries
Of mellow shadow that have each its lair

In your lip's dimple ; or the rose that dies
Along your cheek's smooth curve ; and the rich
air
Haunted with flutterings of entranced surprise
Round the warm edges of white vesture where
Those shy feet peep. Nor are the sorceries
Of this sweet fraud mine only. For you share
The fervid fascinations that arise
From wishes sure to wither if it were
Too soon mistrusted. Love's grand tragedies
Leave we, with all the pomps of their despair,
To souls heroic ! Why should we despise
(We, whose hearts unheroically care
More for the moments than the eternities)
Even the least of little joys, whate'er
Their source, that flush one minute as it flies
With radiant fervours of effulgence rare ?
And if fond fancies aid them to disguise
Their fleeting earthliness in forms that wear
The hues of heaven (like wavelets, distant skies

Paint as they pass), need fretful forethought tear
From their poor wings those borrow'd pageantries?
What if some thunder-cloud soon quench the flare
Wherewith Desire's small bonfires humanise
One spot in the wide desert, whence they scare
The savage beast? No star whose beam supplies
Guidance or light, along the dark we dare
In blind pursuit of unknown destinies,
Will perish with it. Nor does Fate declare
Her will beforehand, tho' besought with sighs,
And groans, and tears, and supplicative prayer.
A miser's thrift is in each mad surmise
That starves the present for the thankless heir.
Who knows what plagues the future may devise
For those whose craft its blessings would ensnare?
Life's end may be to-night. The hour that hies

Is, while it lasts, life's all. So, if I swear
I love you, ask not what the oath implies,
But swear you love me also. We should fare
No better for the doubts that oath defies.
How sad were life, if bitter truth went bare
And what were love itself without such lies ?

LOVE'S LABOUR LOST

1

In the old Piazza at Florence a statue of David stands.
'Tis the masterful work of Michael Angelo's marvellous art,
Yet a failure nevertheless: for it came to the master's hands,
Not a virgin block intact, but already rough-hewn in part.

2

And what Mino da Fiesole did to it, Angelo could not undo.
So the work was but half his own. It is finish'd, yet incomplete.

As that statue to Michael Angelo hundreds of years ago,
So are you at this moment to me: an achievement, and yet a defeat!

3

'Tis that others have been before me, of whose touch you retain the trace.
You are half my work, half theirs. Thro' your spirit and flesh disperst
Is the mark of a love not mine, that my own love cannot efface.
For you were not virgin marble when you came to my hands at first.

HORACE AND LYDIA

(*Modern.*)

HE

YOU ask me, 'Do I love you?' Yes.
'What grace in you my worship wins?'
None. 'Why, then, do I love you?' Guess!
Why does the sinner love his sins?
The drunkard his habitual dram?
The gambler counters, cards, and dice?
A slave to vicious wants I am,
And you are my inveterate vice.

SHE

Impertinent!

HE

For truth you call,
Truth, and truth only. My reply,
Tho' it offend you——

SHE

Not at all!

HE

Was, every word of it——

SHE

A lie!

HE

No!

SHE

Yes! For all of flaming fire
Your fancy is, your heart all ice.

HE

Granted. That means that my desire
Is vicious; you, its object, vice.

SHE

No. It means only, thankless friend,
That your desire has flights insane,
And I, beyond whose reach they tend,
Know that the goal they seek is vain.
Your dupe I am not. You deceive
Yourself, it may be, but not me,
When you aver, perhaps believe,
You love me. Ah, but you would be

As little to my liking then
  As all the others are, if you
(In nothing else like other men)
  Did, or could, love me as they do!
You do not love me. I suggest
  Love fancies. Each for each is full
Of riddles that remain half guess'd,
  And doubt, at least, is never dull.
You ought to feel, could you but share
  My wisdom, thankful I am not
The woman that you wish I were.
  To take delight in such a lot
As your caprice for love provides,
  A woman should be either blind
And a born innocent besides,
  Or else of a perverted mind—
Like me! Who deign with cheerfulness
  To be the subject, tho' I know
That of your singular caress
  I never was the object. No!

There lives no woman you could love
  Fairly, for love's sake: tho' from each
You crave in turn what soars above,
  Or fleets beyond, a woman's reach.
Ay, and a man's reach, too! For this
  Ferocious idol, this Afar,
This phantom fetish, from a kiss
  Could never yet create a star!

HE

True. All its miracles require
  The faith of two believers. One
Suffices not. And I aspire
  In vain, for I aspire alone.
Our aims accord not. Mine, that was
  High to uplift us both, has fail'd.
Yours was to drag me down. Alas,
  And it is yours that has prevail'd!

SHE

To drag you down! You found me here
Where you were glad to find me, I
To welcome you. My natural sphere
I keep. Its hospitality
You sought, and all ungrudged 'twas given;
Nor did you spare the proffer'd feast.
If, just because earth is not Heaven,
I make the best of earth, at least
For the best gift earth has to give
Let us be thankful! Me you blame,
And you I tease; yet we contrive
To charm each other all the same.
Earth's child am I, for Heaven unfit.
But I deserve some earthly praise
For kindliness, good looks, and wit,
Altho' not wings I wear, but stays.
All my past lovers I have spoil'd
For other women. Here on earth

You will not find my better. Foil'd
Beforehand, seek! I know my worth.
After me, nothing! Search all round,
What is there left to find?

HE

What they,
The Poet and the Sage, have found:
THE ABSTRACT!

SHE

Has the Abstract, pray,
Lips, limbs, and life? You will but find
Another woman, and a worse,
With faults as little to your mind,
Tho' not the same as mine, of course.

He

I came into your life too late,
  And found you thus, completely made.
I needs must either love or hate
  The thing you are without my aid.
And I would be a maker.

She

Friend,
  Nature would be beforehand still
With all your work. Defeats attend
  The usurpations of her will.
Perfection clothed in petticoats
  Is youth's Chimæra. This sad truth
Your poets sing in mournful notes,
  Your sages preach. The fault of youth

Is always to exaggerate,
And therefore miss the mark. Between
Life's two extremes, in me kind Fate
Accords you now the golden mean.
If one you found with warmer blood
Than mine is, she would be less fair.
Another's milk-white maidenhood
Would lack intelligence. Beware!
To us complacent circumstance
Is well disposed. Our fates are free.
And I would be your last romance,
As you are my first poem. See!

HE

Ah, sceptic, cease! I can nor fight
Nor fly the field. Your lips and eyes
Disarm my reasonings. You are right,
And they are wrong. Be yours the prize

That Pallas ever fails to win!
Lay your hand on my heart once more!
What is it beats so wild within,
If love it be not?

SHE

Shut the door!

FUGIENS IMAGO

1

I HAVE seen her, O how often I have seen her, but to see
Her mysterious evanescence, at a glance, a touch, a tone,
And how often, O how often, has my heart exclaim'd, 'Tis she!'
When, in turning to embrace her, I discover'd she was gone!

2

Gone as soon as greeted! Lost as soon as found!
And then again
All the search for her to recommence, discouraged, otherwhere!

All the doubt, 'Will not the next search, as the last was, be in vain?
Was it she herself, or only a mirage of painted air?'

3

Nay! I could not be mistaken, could not see her and not know,
Could not take her for another! I, whose life has all been pass'd
In predicting her arrival, be its coming ne'er so slow,
And rejoicing in her presence, be its going ne'er so fast!

4

In the moment that I saw her, she was there. This much is sure.
All the rest may be illusion; all the time that went before,

All the time that follow'd after! For 'tis falsehoods that endure,
It is truth that, coming, going, lasts a moment and no more.

5

She is gone, and I have lost her! Yet a little while ago
She was there; and for a moment in your eyes I saw her smile,
In your voice I caught her accents, on your lips I felt the glow
Of her kiss, and I am certain she was there, tho' but a while.

6

Had you recognised her also, had you known her as I knew,
It had then been well for both of us. But, thro' some fault in each,

Now the search for her, you cannot aid, must all
begin anew,
And the moment we retain'd not is already out
of reach.

7

Hush! No vain recriminations! Life has years
to count upon,
But for love are moments only. Love, that all
the whiles between,
Looking forward to their coming, or recalling
them when gone,
Bears two names: the one, 'I SHALL BE!' and
the other, 'I HAVE BEEN!'

STILL!

1

I HAVE invok'd with songs, and sued with tears,
A love still unresponsive to my call.
To find it, I have roam'd the waste of years;
To win it, spent my all.

2

Yet still do I believe in it, still cherish
An unrequited faith, and in the fume
Of fires unblest, that on its altars perish,
Life's substance still consume;

3

Like some poor alchemist, whose days have pin'd
In bondage to bright dreams that but betray'd,
Still raking ruin'd crucibles to find
The gold he never made.

SELENE

I

WHITE Moon, forth-pouring floods of pallid fire
From founts that leave thy sallow orb forever
Ravaged and sear'd, and worn with wan desire,
But fervid never!

2

Bless the pale pleasures of my love and me,
Whose day of life, like thine, is the dark night!
From all the world I have chosen one like thee
For my delight.

3

No burning pulse her livid beauty warms.
But light that maddens the moon-stricken brain
Is in her looks, and in her cold white arms
Are dreams insane.

4

Like thine her chill enchantments! And like thine
My wistful vigils! And of all we are,
Each to the other, the sidereal sign
Is thy weird star.

5

Hushful, as o'er the bosom of the deep
Thou bendest, all night long I bend above
The soul that in her beauty lies asleep,
Dreaming of love.

6

Dreaming of love, not loving! Laid in trance
That waits the awakening touch of some caress
Not yet divined for its deliverence,
And still to guess.

7

Guide with the ghostly lamp's soul-reaching ray,
Desire's meandrous labyrinths among,
My slow sweet search, enamour'd of delay,
And lingering long!

8

My slow sweet search that dreads yet craves the goal
It seeks by ways bewilderingly dense
With dim delights, whose languors lap the soul
In charm'd suspense!

9

She whom I love has from the dawn of time
  Been love's despair. All pleasure and all pain
Her breath begets. All virtue and all crime
    Are her domain.

10

Her intricate charm is like a magic maze,
  Whose central secret never can be found
By any of the interminable ways
    That wind it round.

11

The perilous realms of Unreality
  Her witchcraft rules. And my pale paramour
Fills all their phantom forms, from her faint sigh,
    With strenuous power.

12

Fierce are the Solar Daughters of the South,
Faint, and a Lunar Witch, my leman is.
The North's lone mystery lingers on her mouth,
And chills her kiss.

13

The sun is in their veins, as in the vine:
The moon in hers, as in a sorcerer's cruce,
Has mingled dews and dreams. Their blood is wine:
Hers, morphian juice.

14

And I have drunk of it. And in her eyes
I have beheld, and on her lips pursued,
Passion's most mystical epiphanies;
With faith renew'd

15

In the voluptuous chastities of vice—
Virginities of sin in joys restrain'd,
Fruits of the imperishable paradise
Of the Unattain'd!

TRAVELLING ACQUAINTANCES

1

On my road at the dawn of day
Joy accosted me, passing me by.
We were both of us going one way;
But, alas, he went faster than I,
And in vain I besought him to stay.

2

'Prithee speed not,' I panted, 'so fast,
Fellow-traveller! Fain would I be

Thy companion, and share to the last
The long course of my journey with thee!'
Never pausing, however, he pass'd.

3

'We can fare not together,' he cried,
'Any farther. But do not despond!
We may meet yet again.' And I sigh'd,
'Where again may I meet thee?' 'Beyond!'
Joy, pointing his finger, replied.

4

'A remembrance,' he murmur'd, 'meanwhile
('Tis the best that my passage bestows)
I bequeath thee, sad days to beguile.'
And he flung me a half-wither'd rose;
And was gone with a nod and a smile.

5

On I went, till the noon had wax'd hot.
Then I came to a blossoming grove.
There, alone in a flowery spot,
I was suddenly greeted by Love.
But I trembled, and answer'd him not.

6

For his face was the face of a stranger,
And I seem'd to myself to be there
A forbidden and trespassing ranger.
And, beholding Love's weapons, 'Beware!'
Said my heart to me. 'Here there is danger.'

7

But the whisper of Love was so sweet,
And the spell of his beauty so strong,
And with welcome so warm did he greet,
And so tenderly drew me along,
That I fell down faint at his feet.

8

Merry butterflies hither and thither
Were a-wooing. Sweet birds caroll'd clear.
All around, it was midsummer weather.
And I said, 'This is Paradise! Here
Let us linger forever together!'

9

With a frown Love averted his face,
And his voice took a menacing tone,
As he struggled to break mine embrace,
Crying, 'Loose me, for I must be gone!
I have linger'd too long from the chase.'

10

'If thou leavest me, what shall I do?'
I cried, clinging, imploring, and fond.
'And ah, whither away wouldst thou go?'
Love impatiently answer'd, 'Beyond!'
And the sunshine seem'd turned into snow.

11

'If,' I wept, 'thy last word has been spoken,
Cruel fugitive, ere thou depart,
Leave me one little lingering token!'
Then he struck me a blow at the heart,
And I felt in it something was broken.

12

I arose, sick, and faint, and in pain,
But still, staggering, onward I went,
Till the sun was low down, and the plain
Sad and cold, and its colours all spent,
And the daylight beginning to wane.

13

Rough and hard was the way, tho' down hill;
And my feet were both weary and sore;
And the road I was journeying still
Had a narrower track than before;
And the twilight hung heavy and chill.

14

Where around me the long shadows lay,
And the path became doubtful and dim,
I was met by a traveller grey;
And his aspect was furtive and grim,
Like a beast's that is prowling for prey.

15

He approach'd me, and seized, and embraced,
As he cried to me, 'Welcome at last!
It is late, but I am not in haste,
And we too have no need to go fast.
Thou art weary, and I am slow-paced.'

16

'Of my hand,' I groan'd, writhing, 'let go!'
For I neither could loosen nor bear
The cold pressure of his. But, 'Ah, no!'
The grey traveller said. 'I am Care.
Love and Joy have gone from thee, I know.

17

But my fingers hold faster,' said he,
'Than the bite of an adamant bond.'
'Is there nowhere, then, refuge from thee?'
I exclaim'd in despair. And 'Beyond,'
He said faintly, 'perchance there may be!'

IV.

1

I have search'd the universe, beneath, above,
And everywhere with this importunate lyre
Have wander'd desperately seeking Love,
But everywhere have only found Desire.

2

I have probed the spheres above, the spheres beneath.
Their dim abysms have echo'd to my shout
Invoking Truth. But time, space, life, and death,
And joy, and sorrow, only answer'd 'Doubt!'

SEAWARD

1

THE green grows ever greyer as we pass;
The lean soil sandier; the spacious air
More breezy; raggeder the bristly grass;
And the few crookèd leafless trees more rare.

2

And now nor grass, nor trees! But only stones
Tufted with patches of wild rosemary
And spurge. Behind them hidden, something moans;
And large white birds come with a questioning cry.

3

What's there, beyond? A thing unsearch'd and strange;
Not happier, but different. Something vast
And new. Some unimaginable change
From what has been. Perchance the end at last?

NOCTURN

I

ROLL, waves! To rest refused I too aspire.
Weep, clouds! I too shed tears that fall in vain.
Lightnings, illuminate ye my drear desire!
Thunder, be thou the echo of my pain!

2

Black-shrouded midnight, shuddering with cold sighs,
And fearful with faint creepings, gather all
Thy ghosts and spectres! Bid them each devise
New horrors to adorn thy sable hall!

3

For the drear drama the drear stage prepare,
Deck it with deluge, garland it with storm,
Assemble all the Powers of Darkness there,
And what I suffer let them then perform!

4

Not long will they their fleeting parts sustain
In the fixt misery I endure alone.
To-morrow's sun will scatter to-night's rain;
When comes the dawn the darkness will be gone;

5

To-morrow will the storm its force have spent;
But mine will be to-morrow and to-morrow
The same unutterable discontent,
Stung by the same intolerable sorrow!

OCEANUS

1

LIKE a strong, beautiful, ill-used wild beast,
The Ocean, caged between its craggy shores,
Stretches its long limbs out, with panting breast,
And rolls, and roars.

2

Its large lair is for its large life too small.
For here are the world's waters all in one,
And all the sounds of all the nations, all
In a single tone!

3

Hark! With the monstrous murmurs of the
Pnyx
Here do a hundred thousand litanies
From Christendom's cathedral organs mix;
And here the sighs

4

Breathed by a million breaking hearts are heard;
Here the long roar of the fierce Roman crowd
Comes rolling Capitolian echoes, stirr'd
To response loud

5

When Cæsar graced the gladiatorial show,
And from the reeking circus rose to him
The death-shriek of the doom'd who died below,
Torn limb from limb.

6

Harken again! A whisper from afar,
Faint, but how fearful! Like the sighing breath
Of some plague-smitten city, a red star
Scorches to death.

7

But from the silence the sound preys upon
It gathers strength, and breaks into low thunder
As of a huge host heavily marching on,
Laden with plunder.

8

Italy, when the midnight moons went down
Long ages since upon her dark blue plains,
Heard it, and shudder'd. Heard the tongues unknown,
The rumbling wains,

9

The riot of barbarian vanquishers,
The mountains moving to the Ostian shore
Over those beautiful bruised limbs of hers,
With an ominous roar.

10

Ay! All earth's sounds, on all earth's waters borne,
Meet here in dreadful interchange. And over
Ocean's drear bosom, beating wings forlorn,
Lost echoes hover.

11

The echoes of all sorrows and all crimes
Suffer'd or perpetrated long ago
In miserable old remorseless times
Of sin and woe.

12

Therefore does terror haunt thy solitude,
Dread Sea! And all its melancholy waves
And mountainous billows, by wild ghosts pursued,
Are wandering graves.

13

Yet 'mid thy moanings multitudinous
A silenced song's pathetic echo floats,
Slight but still sweet. What is it moves me thus
In those low notes?

14

It is that in a holier happier time
The harp of Orpheus lull'd thy lyric shores,
And thou hast listen'd to the rhythmic chime
Of Argo's oars:

15

It is that Aphrodite's natal morn
Beheld her borne upon thine azure breast,
And once thy furrow'd desert, now forlorn,
Was Alcyon's nest.

A LOST CHANCE

1

THE glimpses of the moon with fitful lights,
That flash'd and fled between swift cloud-drifts sweeping,
Strew'd all the dark sea. And the Water Sprites
Merrily in those moony gleams were leaping.

2

I saw them, and amongst them saw again
The little Mermaid that, long years ago,
Taught me sea-magic, many a mystic strain
Of Siren song, and all the spells I know.

3

All that she taught me, in the unmagical
Monotonously wakeful world wherein,
Toiling and moiling, I have wasted all
My after-years in sadness that was sin,

4

I had forgotten, and her too. But she
Was looking just as when I saw her last,
Not here, but by that other happier sea
Where we were playmates in the painless past.

5

And when I saw and recognised her there,
The old song, all at once, and the old spell
Came back to me. Along the moonlit air
She sigh'd and beckon'd. I remember'd well

6

The word I was to utter when we met,
And half gave voice to it. But suddenly
A cloud closed up the moon, and black as jet
Became the solid darkness of the sky.

7

The vision vanish'd. I no longer felt
Sure of the word. The night was full of doubt
And fear. And I was conscious that there dwelt
In its black bosom secrets not made out

8

By any magic I had learn'd of old.
So, passive, in suspense I stood, nor stirr'd,
While o'er my soul the darkness closed its hold
As a hand closes on a frighten'd bird.

SATURNALIA

1

Hid in the heaviest dark, a mystery
Within a mystery, the sea augments
Night's witchcraft with its shadowy sound; the sigh
Of an uneasy silence, that half vents
In sobs and gasps the dreadful secrecy
Of its contents!

2

And yet another mystery haunts the night:
The uncouth, phantasmal, bodiless return
Of Chaos. That which was before the light

Comes back when light departs, and the deep
urn
Of darkness voids confusions infinite
That seethe and yearn.

3

All spectres now resume their dim domain.
A shrouded dream is passing o'er the deep.
The scatter'd clusters of effaced stars wane
Behind a livid film. The shuddering heap
Of waters hoarser breathes. Athwart my brain
Vast shadows sweep.

4

My waking self sinks from me. In its place
There comes a sense of preternatural force
Freed from thought's timid tyranny. The chase
Begins. The phantom bugles blow. To horse!
I mount the Nightmare. Fleet thro' time and
space
Speeds our wild course!

5

Where are we hurrying, they and I? And they,
Who are they? We shall find each other out
As we go on, perhaps, and by the way
Discover also what we are about.
Heavens! Is it you? How came you here astray
In such a rout?

6

They told me you were settled down in life,
Well married, living far away from here
In your own country, a good happy wife
And mother, virtue's model, a sincere
Church-goer, all whose decent days were rife
With heavenly cheer.

7

Yet here you are to-night, without a blush,
Stark naked, riding furious at my side
The Devil's own charger! Foremost in the push
Of this fierce crowd, and no attempt to hide
Your unashamed enjoyment of the rush
Of our wild ride!

8

Who is it you were laughing with just now
Before you join'd me? The tall woman there,
With the gold fillet glittering on her brow,
And those large long-lash'd eyes, and bosoms bare?
What is it hanging from her saddle bow
By a tress of hair?

9

Stay! Now she has it in her hands. It is
A dead man's head. And how her burning
eyes
Gloat on its horror! How her red lips kiss
Those white ones! Yes, 'tis she. I recognize
Herodias. But you never told me this.
Who could surmise

10

That you were old associates? And you,
Whom have you loved to death, that you
should be
Here in such company? Yon couple, too?
She with the man asleep upon her knee?
Asleep, or dead? A nail is driven thro'
His forehead. See!

II

With what still rapture her white fingers rove
Among his matted curls, as low she bends
Her glowing gaze his upturn'd face above,
Husht as a watchful mother when she tends
Her sick child, lull'd to sleep with songs of love!
So you are friends?

12

I noticed that the woman, as we pass'd,
Nodded to you encouragingly. Drums
And cymbals! Hark! Behind us prancing fast,
Here, with the head of Holofernes, comes
Dame Judith, bravely dress'd! And now, the vast
Black midnight hums

13

With a mysterious far-off music. Songs
Unholy, soft lascivious Lydian lyres,
Shrill Phrygian pipes, and throbbing Scythian gongs,
In wizard concert where, round monstrous fires,
The redden'd gloom reveals dim dancing throngs,
And loose-robed choirs.

14

O hasten! Hasten! If we get not there
Before the dawn breaks, we shall be undone!
Our steeds flag, and we still have far to fare.
Flog the jade fast! The revel has begun.
Faster! Our names are call'd. Death and despair!
Too late . . . . the Sun!

PERTURBATION

1

GRAYER and dimmer grow the dim grey bounds
Of the leaden twilight, salter the sea's breath,
And harsher, angrier, the low moan that sounds
Yon crags beneath.

2

The unquiet sea-birds seem unquieter,
And more importunate their plaintive quest.
About the sullen beach begins to stir
A vague unrest.

3

Sightless has set the ineffectual sun.
There is no moon, no star, no visible cloud.
But land, and sky, and sea are swathed in one
Sepulchral shroud.

4

And now that shroud is troubled, tho' unrent.
There comes a menacing movement from afar,
And sounds as of a distant armament
Arming for war.

5

It is as tho' the elements—earth, air,
And water—each in its own camp aloof,
Were furtively beginning to prepare
And put to proof

6

Each its own weapons, or to organise
Each its own forces, for some strife impending.
Swift silent signals for the winds to rise
The air is sending.

7

The sea is gathering from the outer deep
Its heavier waves. Like some beleaguer'd giant,
The land is setting fast on cliff and steep
A front defiant.

8

And coldly, shudderingly, creepily,
With these awakenings of the torpid pain
Pent in the pallid land, the pallid sky,
The pallid main,

9

My heart begins to move once more, and be
Again the battle-field of ghastly hosts
At war with one another, and with me.
Legions of ghosts!

10

Yet will the abortive stir beginning now
Change or determine nothing. When 'tis o'er,
Heaven, earth, and sea, and I, will all, I know,
Be as before.

11

Rest, wretched slaves of Nature, whose mad zest
Of movement makes the curse that you inherit
Harder to bear! Rest, winds and waves! Rest, rest,
Perturbèd Spirit!

STORM

1

WHAT is there here of aught experience knows,
Or language names? This movement without form
Of hideous power in unproductive throes?
Storm! Is it storm?

2

But like no storm I have ever heard of, seen
Portray'd in pictures, read about in books,
Or dream'd in sleep, the interminable scene
Of sameness looks.

3

There is no storm-rack visible. There are
No thunders audible. There is no play
Of forkt ethereal fires, no lurid glare,
Nothing but grey!

4

Grey everywhere, grey always! Day and night
For what seems ages long have ceased to be;
And there is neither darkness nor yet light
On land or sea.

5

Nothing but grey! One part of it is air,
Another water, and another earth.
But of all shape and colour these three share
A common dearth.

6

Some horrible impulse moves the whole grey mass,
Wrapp'd in such rain as no resemblance bears
To any other rain that ever was.
For this appears

7

A firmamental flood, that forward speeds;
Forward, not downward; and in sheets, not drops;
Whose sweeping surge in a plain course proceeds,
And never stops.

8

There are no clouds, but all is cloudiness.
There are no winds, but all the wide grey sky,
Borne on the wide grey rain in mad distress,
Is rushing by.

9

There are no waves, but all the wide grey Ocean
Jerks up and down with the recurrent thump
Of a monotonous mechanical motion,
In a livid lump.

10

From that mechanical motion comes a groan
As of some mighty engine-beam or screw,
Renew'd each moment with no change of tone.
Mechanical too!

11

Mechanical, and yet with life at least
Enough in it to make its meaningless cry
More maddening than all noise of man, or beast,
Or enginry.

12

Nothing, no single sight or sound, is here
Either sublime or beautiful. But all
Has in its dull enormity a drear
Power to appal.

13

Such sameness with such terrible unrest,
Such vast yet uneventful agitation,
For days and nights have heaven and earth possess'd
Without cessation!

14

For days and nights, so far as thought can tell,
Had day or night survived! But time, like space,
Grown featureless and undefinable,
No periods trace.

15

When first I felt the storm's approach, my heart
Leapt up and hail'd it, glad of any change
From the cruel calm, and eager to take part
In something strange.

16

The contemplation of repose and joy
In Nature soothes not when the soul is sore;
And to an aching heart a smiling sky
Is a pain the more.

17

And so I hail'd a hoped enfranchisement
Of grandeur, when this change began. Vain thought!
Great only in duration and extent,
And grand in naught,

18

'Tis but a grisly chaos far and wide
Monopolised by powers unbeautiful,
Whose dulness, terribly intensified,
Makes terror dull.

19

Dull as the incessant multitudinous strife
Of the social world, that only magnifies
Each meanness of the individual life
To a monstrous size!

20

The python is but an enormous worm:
The reptile still a reptile, large or small:
The calm was dreary, drearier is the storm:
And that is all!

DIMINUENDO

I

TIRED of the sun, and all it shines on; tired
Of life's bright baubles toss'd from hand to hand;
Tired of false joys that are but pains desired;
I seek a land

2

Where sunlight looks like moonlight, and the days
Like evenings, and things present like things past,
And near things like things distant, thro' the haze
Round all things cast.

3

There, in a life no more than half alive,
Let all my waking hours be half asleep,
And sleep's self dreamless of whate'er men strive
To gain or keep!

MOONLAND

1

Dim, lonesome, melancholy Moonland, hail!
My tired heart's home is in thy lap at last,
And I have learn'd to love thy features pale
As passions past.

2

To me thy colourless cold sea and shore
Have grown congenial, and thy sullen air,
And ghostly winds that sighingly explore
Boughs all but bare.

3

Flowers in thy hueless herbage flourish not.
But here dwell, hid in hollows of grey sand,
Dwarf pansies; and marsh-mallow blossoms spot
The inner land;

4

Where, at the setting of thine unseen sun,
Small fenny pools gleam out of the dark plain,
Staring at night, and after day is done
Its glare retain.

5

Land of long silences, low whisperings,
And sorrowful lights! Familiar things, that seem
Themselves elsewhere, look here like other things,
As in a dream.

6

What are they, crouching yonder, crook'd so low?
Mere clumps of rock their misty forms may be,
But wither'd hags, whose wicked trades I know,
They seem to me.

7

That sallow sand-drift, where the shingles halt,
A wasted remnant of myself appears.
This stagnant tarn has in its ooze the salt
Of human tears.

8

And all the land is loaded with a weight
Of resignation to some torpid woe.
The heavens are smileless, the fields desolate,
The waters slow.

9

Time makes not any effort to divert
  Aught here from its monotonous attitude
Of dull distress. Each feature is inert,
  Each sound subdued.

10

What now it looks, the landscape seems to say
  That from the world's beginning it has been,
And that its league-long lamentable grey
  Was never green.

11

Yet this, too, is illusion, like the rest!
  The soil's fixt features Nature's fitful will
Has changed and changed: and the immutablest
  Is changing still,

12

Thro' transmutations every moment wrought
By heat and cold, or damp and drowth; and those
That in commixture with my own sick thought
It undergoes.

13

For 'tis not only by the tide-wave's toil
That yonder coast has been so scoop'd and hack'd,
Not only rains and rays that this lean soil
Have scarr'd and crack'd.

14

My life's spent passions, sorrows, tears, and sighs
In the land's hurt have had their dismal part;
And the chief cause of its dejection lies
In my own heart.

15

I know not how it was, nor why it is,
But well I know that, whatsoe'er it be,
The region round me has become like this
Because of me.

16

Thou know'st it, too, sad Moonland! That is why
Thou dost remind me of it everywhere.
Thy cold sun has the gaze of a grey eye,
Thy sullen air

17

The breath of a lost presence, miss'd how much!
Thy faint winds whisper words I understand
Too well! Thy stillness stirs me with the touch
Of a dead hand.

SELENITES

1

SOMETHING sets trembling all the stars. A sigh
Stirs the dark land. The moon is rising pale.
Slowly a strange procession passes by
Along the vale.

2

All women, and all beautiful, all white,
All woebegone! For many a thousand years
The day has ne'er beheld them, and the night
Their presence fears.

3

A Seraph leads them. But of fallen state.
His wings are clipp'd, yet still their size exceeds
The limbs they lift not, and their heavy weight
His pace impedes.

4

The moon alone knows what these women are.
The sun was never in their secrets. They
Know not each other. But one woe they share,
One fate obey.

5

Whence come they? Whither are their footsteps bound?
The Past forgets. The Future cannot tell.
They have lost their place on earth, and none have found
In Heaven or Hell.

6

For Heaven not good enough, for Hell too good,
For life too loving, and for death too dear,
Pale ghosts of passion-wasted womanhood,
They wander here,

7

Visible only to the tear-wash'd eyes
Whose vision mirrors supernatural sights.
But I, the initiated, recognise
The Selenites!

SOMNIUM BELLUINUM

1

I HAVE dream'd a bad dream, and it harrows me
still
With a horror of worse impending.
I was plodding, persistently plodding up hill,
And the hill was a hill never ending:

2

On, I toilfully went in tenacious pursuit
Of a something before me going:
But if human it was, or divine, or brute,
I had never a means of knowing:

3

For I neither could touch it, nor hear it, nor see:
Yet I steadily strove to attain it,
Since I knew it was there, by a feeling in me
That sufficed, tho' I cannot explain it.

4

There was tree upon tree by the way that I went:
And each tree was a female Briareus,
With its feminine arms about me bent
In embraces vicious and various.

5

As a path of his own does the pioneer cut,
Thro' the prairie his wild way clearing,
So did I cut mine thro' those arms, and shut,
As I struck at them, both eyes—fearing!

6

But a shriek I heard as at each fresh stroke
Thro' a shatter'd embrace I hasten'd,
And was wet with the drip of the blood that broke
From the clasp that a wound unfasten'd.

7

And before I again look'd up I knew
That the thing I pursued had escaped me.
It was gone. And a different scene, quite new,
The bad dream I was dreaming shaped me.

8

For the hill to a plain had dissolved away,
And the plain had no mark, no limit,
But as far as my vision could reach it lay
(Not a shrub or a shadow to dim it!)

9

In the sultry embrace of a Syrian noon:
And, along it confusedly streaming,
A profusion of emigrant prodigies soon
Reärranged the bad dream I was dreaming.

10

'Twas a monstrous procession. In front of it came
The sleek Basilisks, hissing and sighing:
In the forehead of each did a diamond flame,
And the Wyverns were after them flying.

11

But below were the Dragons with three-prong'd feet,
And each Dragon was forty-footed,
And they furrow'd the plain with the flap and beat
Of their tails, and its sods uprooted.

12

In a merrily gambolling company pass'd
The lithe Leopards, and Ounces, and Lynxes:
Then the Jaguars, Panthers, and Pumas: and last
Came the beautiful leonine Sphinxes.

13

In their somnolent motion they seem'd to repose:
Was it walking, or flying, or floating?
Not a sound from their paws as they pass'd me arose
The approach of their presence denoting;

14

Not a fold of their filleted tiars was stirr'd;
Not a pulse in their peak'd breasts flutter'd;
But as murmuring seas by a slumberer heard
Were the mystic enigmas they mutter'd.

15

And their eyes were incessantly changing hue;
And each hue of them fitfully thrill'd me
With a different pang. When those eyes were blue,
'Twas a passionate longing that fill'd me;

16

When they alter'd to violet, from them came
Indescribable desolation;
But when red, 'twas a frenzy of burning flame;
And when black, it was life's cessation.

17

The blithe Centaurs cantering came with a bound,
And a rattle of arrowy quivers:
Then a troop of green Gryphons, golden-crown'd,
From the Arimaspian rivers.

18

There were two-leggèd Dogs with the airs of gods;
And, escorting Cat-countenanced Creatures,
Supernatural Apes with divining rods
And fatidical sinister features:

19

And a ponderous phalanx, serried and square,
Of the man-faced Bulls of Chaldea,
Whose bewildering bulks dead embodiments are
Of the strength of a dread Idea.

20

From the back of each Bull rose four vast wings
In a feather'd pavilion arching;
And they all had the faces of bearded kings;
And their steps were as mountains marching.

21

But above the grim multitudes trooping in herds
Thro' the Syrian sultriness glitter'd
A tumultuous pageant of strange colour'd birds,
And they hooted, and whistled, and twitter'd.

22

Clad in crimson, and orange, and azure, and green,
There were Peacocks, and Parrots, and Loories,
And Flamingoes, and Hoopoes, and Fowls obscene
With the eyeballs and talons of Furies.

23

And the Hawk and the Ibis were carrying, both,
Babylonian rolls of papyrus;
And the scripture thereon was the sentence of Thoth
On the souls of Belshazzar and Cyrus.

24

In the rear of the Birds with a wavering flight
Came a flock of Chimæras meagre,
And a squadron of blue-wing'd Serpents bright,
With their forkt tongues flickering eager.

25

But the Phœnix it was that commanded the whole,
As its high priest, herald, and warder.
In his beak he was bearing a fiery coal,
And it burn'd with unquenchable ardour:

26

As a fiery coal had he made it to be,
But I knew 'twas my own heart burning:
For I felt the hot flame of it withering me
With the heat of an agonised yearning.

27

And I cried to them, 'What are you going to do
With my heart, all you prodigies bestial;
For what sacrifice fierce have you kindled it so
With infernal fire? Or celestial?'

28

In exorbitant wrath, when I cried to them this,
They responded aloud and together,
With an uproar as tho' from the riven Abyss
'Twere Leviathan rending his tether.

29

In fuliginous films the disquieted sand
Flew about, and above, and beclouded
The insatiable sun; and the shuddering land
In a blood-red pall was enshrouded.

30

For the Bulls of Chaldea resentfully stamp'd
In a bellowing band: and up bounded
The roused Panthers and Pumas: the Jaguars ramp'd:
And the bows of the Centaurs resounded,

31

As their darts flew about in the blood-colour'd gloom:
Into rings where the Dragons contorted:
In the eyes of the leonine Sphinxes was doom:
The Chimæras all whinnied and snorted:

32

And the green Gryphons yelp'd: and, like murderous priests,
In pursuit of me fast, as I fled them,

Came the two-leggèd Dogs and Cat-countenanced
Beasts,
With the Ape-headed Horrors that led them:

33

And the Birds and the Basilisks madden'd the air
With a horrible screeching and hissing:
Till at last I awoke with a clutch of despair
At my heart. But too late! It was missing.

EPILOGUE

1

My songs flit away on the wing:
They are fledged with a smile or a sigh:
And away with the songs that I sing
Flit my joys, and my sorrows, and I.

2

For time, as it is, cannot stay:
Nor again, as it was, can it be:
Disappearing and passing away
Are the world, and the ages, and we.

3

Gone, even before we can go,
Is our past, with its passions forgot,
The dry tears of its wept-away woe,
And its laughters that gladden us not.

4

The builder of heaven and of earth
Is our own fickle fugitive breath:
As it comes in the moment of birth,
So it goes in the moment of death.

5

As the years were before we began,
Shall the years be when we are no more:
And between them the years of a man
Are as waves the wind drives to the shore.

6

Back into the Infinite tend
The creations that out of it start:
Unto every beginning an end,
And whatever arrives shall depart.

7

But I and my songs, for awhile,
As together away on the wing
We are borne with a sigh or a smile,
Have been given this message to sing—

8

The Now is an atom of sand,
And the Near is a perishing clod:
But Afar is as Faëry Land,
And Beyond is the bosom of God.

APPENDIX

LORD LYTTON'S LAST POEM[1]

* * *

I HAD not thought that severance from her side
Aught but a bitter pang could ever be;
Yet this—the first time flowing seas divide
My days from hers, since that great day when we
To one another all at once became,
The sole man, I, and the sole woman she,
Of a new world where nothing is the same
As in the world that was,—e'en separation
Reveals an unanticipated bliss,
And all its pains find more than compensation
In our completer intercourse. It is

[1] See Preface.

* * *

That for the first time also we can write
Each to the other now without restraint
Or insecurity. 'Twas in the sight
Of others only that, while breathing still
The same air, and still treading the same soil,
We met; save rarely, when our simple skill
Was helped by some strong favouring chance to foil
The dragons of my heart's Hesperides.
And then the newness of our own desires
That would not suffer joy to be at ease,
And thoughts that, as along electric wires,
Flash'd none but brief and broken messages
Because the stint o' the costly time forbade
Love's longed-for luxury of full utterance—all
These interferences with freedom made
Our meetings marred, and mingled drops of gall
With the spoilt honey of their sweetest hours.
But now such furtive signs and hurried hints
Of feelings prison-bound by hindering powers

* * *

Find confirmation nothing checks or stints
In the full-flowing fearless tenderness
Of written words, wherein the loaded heart
Loosens the long-pent and importunate stress
Of its dear burden. Absence, too, presents
A power (how often wished) to stand apart
A little while from this new past of ours,
This past so brief, so recently begun,
Scarce older than the rose of August's bowers,
And yet so full already of events,
So rich in marvels and in memories!
And, thus, released from time's embarrassments,
To sort and set in order one by one
Its crowded treasures with undazzled eyes,
Their wealth explore and realise as true
Those bright confused experiences that seemed
Whilst still so all bewilderingly new
No surer than the sense of sweet things dreamed.
Until, mere jumbled heaps of gems no more,
But gem by gem in shining sequence spread,

* * *

Love in lone hours may tell his rosary o'er
Nor miss one bead from memory's golden thread.
Heart's heart of mine! Till life's last lingering ray,
Will it not light us, though its sun be set,
That day of days, our memorablest day
Among the woods and ruins? Our lips met
The first time then. 'Twas you that led the way,
Which only you of all our number knew,
For strangers to the land both I and they.
The others followed us. I walked with you.
And as we went you told me legends gay
Of the dead rulers of those ruins green;
Counts of the Coast who there held royal sway
In the land's old time. All breezy bright had been
The days till now; but this was silvery grey
And soft and still. The path you led us wound
Along low brambled copses glimmering white
With giant hemlock. At the last we found

* * *

A sudden clearing where the hill was quite
Unwooded. Ruin'd walls were tumbled round
Bare slopes of grass, and nought beyond in sight
But woods whose purple belts the prospect bound
Beneath us and about us left and right.
Poised on the sky-line of a little mound
You looked and listened, and your woodland eyes
Deepened, and from your lips came rippling clear
A short quick laugh. 'Our friends are, I surmise,
Still far behind us. Let us wait them here!'
You said, and down you sat upon the ground,
And I beside you. From the invisible sea
Came to us a long lone melancholy sound.
Else, all was still; the hills, the woods, and we;
Stiller than sleep. I heard, as in a swound,
My own heart beat, while side by side we sat
So silent. All your drooping face was drown'd
In a rosy glow. You loosed your mouse-grey hat,
And where you laid it low upon your knee
Round it I tried to wreathe—I know not what,

* * *

Some long * * * weed. You shook your
brown curls free,
And made an effort vain to smoothe them flat,
And laughed again, but would not look at me.
Then we began to talk of this and that
In lifeless tones. Our thoughts from all we said
And all the scene that we were gazing at
Were far away. But we had grown afraid
Of silence. You were plucking tufts of grass,
And strewing them about you, blade by blade.
I mused—'How oft may it have come to pass
That just where we are sitting here, we two,
The ruins round us and the revelling mass
Of the proud woods above us and below,
And the sea's voice familiar yet forlorn
Heard on the stillness, others sat before
In the unreckon'd years ere we were born?
How often, too, when we shall be no more,
Will others on the wood-girt hillside here
Again sit talking while the day goes by,

* * *

As we are talking now—as vainly near,
As falsely far with an inaudible sigh
Between them! Others ignorant of our case,
Full of their own, and only moved thereby,
Yet haply stirr'd like us by thoughts too dear
For utterance; and like us,—at least like me,
Babbling about the features of this place
Albeit as heedless of them as can be;
Talking for talk's sake only, who the while
Can only think of——'
There you raised your face,
And full on mine you turn'd it suddenly
With swimming eyes and half heart-broken smile,
Low murmuring 'Only think of—what?'
But I
Was silence-struck. Vain verbiage, brought to bay
Abruptly by the sharp reality,
Grovell'd with inarticulate disgrace,
Dumfounded: Not a word more could I say.

* * *

And shudderingly, all resistance vain,
Like things caught up, and seized, and swept away
By the unconquerable hurricane,
We rushed together with a faint wild cry,
Closed in a mute embrace that present past
And future Love made boundless to engirth.
How long did those transcendent moments last?
Enough to metamorphose heaven and earth
And both our lives, whose old world vanishing fast
Reveal'd a new world glowing into birth.
When pillow'd on my breast lay pale, supine,
The passion-tranced submissive loveliness
Of your surrender'd beautiful soft face,
Breathing faint bliss, with lips upturn'd to mine
Half open, lids half closed; and I could trace
In the deep languors of those longlash'd eyes,
Reveal'd at last, the whole pathetic tale
Of all the martyrdoms, the agonies,

* * *

The pangs and rendings such a soul as yours,
Before it suffers passion to prevail,
In its resistance to the fierce surprise
Of love's invasion, silently endures;
Then I remember'd that throughout it all,
That time of dread suspicions, and fierce throes,
And proud revolts and warnings augural
Of evil, I, your poor friend, who Heaven knows
Would, if he thus might spare you love's least ache,
Or win you any blessing peace bestows,
Have roll'd in Tophet's flame-pits for your sake,
Must all that woeful while have been by those
Ill-ominous denunciators made
To wear the semblance of your worst of foes,
The man of whom you should be most afraid,
His love, a wrong your pride must needs resent,
His presence your young life's most menacing
And deadliest danger; and yet none the less,

* * *

Even when your heart most feared that dreaded
thing,
The shamed acknowledgment of love's success,
Even when your brave soul was the most intent
To save a noble pride from the distress
Of arms surrender'd in a noble strife,
That peerless perfect sense of justice blent
With all the instincts of a high-born heart,
Held fast; nor ever did you stoop to vent
The trouble that was torturing your own life
On me, the cause of it. No peevish start
Of sudden coldness meant to mystify
The man who loved you; no attempt to gain
Respite for doubt by even the smallest lie;
No unjust word; no cruel feminine art
Of self-protection practised in disdain
Of love's good faith. * * *

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